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W. Loll

THE
ANNUAL ADDRESS

OF THE

Conference

TO THE

METHODIST SOCIETIES

IN

GREAT BRITAIN,

IN THE CONNEXION ESTABLISHED BY THE

LATE REV. JOHN WESLEY, M. A.

—◆—
AUGUST, 1823.

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LONDON:

Printed by T. Cordoux:

SOLD BY T. BLANSHARD, 14, CITY-ROAD, AND 66, PATERNOS-
TER-RROW; AND AT THE METHODIST CHAPEL-HOUSES IN TOWN
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DEARLY BELOVED
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ADDRESS.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

THE season is again returned when it becomes our pleasing task to address you on subjects the most interesting to you and to ourselves. The mutual affection and confidence which subsist between us afford us the greatest satisfaction, and encourage us to discharge our present duty with unreserved freedom. We "greet you in the LORD," earnestly wishing you "grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, our SAVIOUR."

On this occasion we feel ourselves called upon to express our warmest gratitude to "the Father of Mercies, and the God of all comfort," for the protection and support which he has granted to his Servants during the year, and for the general prosperity with which he has crowned their labours. To observe the success which attends the exertions of other Christian Denominations, is highly gratifying to us; but it is particularly encouraging to find, on an attentive examination of the general state of our Societies, that the "truth as it is in JESUS" is extensively prevailing under our own Ministry. "God is" indeed "with us," and continues to give us the most unequivocal proofs of his presence and approbation. Again we erect our "Eben-ezer," and thankfully acknowledge that "hitherto hath the LORD helped us."

Considerable prosperity has, by the blessing of God, accompanied our proceedings both at home and

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abroad. The increase of our numbers this year is, in Great Britain, Eight Thousand and Six, and, on the Missionary Stations, One Thousand Six Hundred and Fifty-Three; making, in the whole, Nine Thousand Six Hundred and Fifty-Nine. We have also reason to believe, on the most satisfactory evidence, that, in connexion with the increase of numbers, there is, in general, an increase of spiritual and practical religion among our people. The spirit of christian zeal, which prevails in many of our Societies in this country, is very encouraging. The work on our Foreign Stations is also rapidly extending; and, while the Heathen are becoming more deeply sensible of their need of instruction, and are more eagerly desiring Christian Missionaries, it is pleasing to learn that they are, in many instances, truly "receiving CHRIST JESUS the LORD." The relations which some of the Missionaries have given us, at this Conference, clearly show that *sound and scriptural conversions* are more than ever frequent on our Stations abroad, and that the work of God, in all its spiritual power and practical effects, is deepening and enlarging among those who until lately never heard the name of CHRIST. In Pagan lands the various ordinances of God's house are established, well attended, and loved; religious Societies are formed; christian knowledge is rapidly advancing; and the experience of the power of godliness, which many profess, is clear, scriptural, and deep. All this meets, and even surpasses, our highest expectations; nor can we avoid regarding it as a favourable token that the time is approaching, when the "mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains,

and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it."

While we thankfully notice these indications of growing success, we wish you, dear Brethren, to view them in a practical light. Again we earnestly recommend to you a diligent attention to the duties which were particularly mentioned in our last Annual Address. Be unwearied in promoting the christian education of your children and domestics,—in maintaining the regular and devout worship of God in your families,—in attending the ordinances of God's house, *by no means neglecting those opportunities which occur on week-day evenings*,—in circulating religious Tracts,—in establishing meetings for prayer,—in "walking worthy of the LORD unto all well-pleasing," and thus striving to promote more extensively, as well as to possess more fully, the "excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST." Be "workers together with God ;" and while he graciously favours you with the tokens of his presence, regard this, not only as a motive to gratitude, but as a call to increasing diligence and activity in every part of his work.

Amidst these endeavours, we would not fail to mention the necessity of relying more entirely on the promised agency of the HOLY SPIRIT. Let your fervent prayers be offered that his more abundant effusions may descend on yourselves, on the Church of CHRIST at large, and on the "whole world" of mankind. Be attentive to every appearance of his operations in your families and neighbourhood ; work where he works ; and, especially, cultivate his gifts and graces in yourselves. Without Him, so far from advancing in the various parts of the divine life, you cannot maintain and preserve what you have. Listen to his sugges-

tions; yield to his directions; “grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

We would remind you of the importance of acquainting yourselves correctly with the Doctrines of the Gospel which you profess to believe. We refer, particularly, to the doctrines of *justification by faith*, the *direct witness of the SPIRIT*, and *entire sanctification*. These truths are explicitly taught in the Holy Scriptures, and are explained and defended, in the clearest and most convincing manner, in the excellent writings of the REV. MESSRS. WESLEY and FLETCHER, which we cannot too frequently recommend to your serious attention, and repeated perusal. The statements which they contain, the arguments which they allege, and the spirit which they breathe, all mark them as a rich and invaluable repository of religious knowledge. To our people they are an “estate for ever,” and we are persuaded that the more they are examined, the more will the great truths which they enforce be valued and received.

While you strive, however, to obtain clear and scriptural views of the doctrines you profess, permit us, dear Brethren, to exhort you, with all earnestness and affection, to apply them to your own hearts. Are these truths *felt* as well as *known*? Are they *enjoyed* as well as *received*? Can you say that “being justified by faith, you have peace with God through our LORD JESUS CHRIST!” Can you testify that you “have received, not the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;—the SPIRIT itself bearing witness with your spirits that ye are children of God?” And are you “forgetting those things which are behind,—reaching

forth to those things which are before,—and” thus “pressing toward the mark?” On this subject we cannot but be “jealous” concerning some with a “godly jealousy.” Most of you, we trust, retain your confidence in the mercy of God, and continue to “hunger and thirst after righteousness;” but we fear lest any should settle into a state of spiritual indolence and indifference, and forget that “God hath called them unto” entire “holiness.” Remember, dear Brethren, that this is one of the great privileges which have been uniformly and distinctly announced to you by that Ministry under which you sit: consider that while you neglect it, you are not only making no progress, but are sustaining serious loss, and are, *imperceptibly* perhaps, but *certainly*, declining in the life of God: and reflect that even in *seeking* this blessing, you are, in an eminent degree, *saved*,—saved from indifference, from unwatchfulness, from carnal security; and that “He is faithful, who hath promised” a full salvation, “who also will” bestow it on all that diligently and perseveringly seek it. “Having the promises,” with which the Scriptures abound on this subject, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;” that we may be “vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use.” God grant that, with respect to all spiritual blessings, you may “so perfectly, and without any doubt, believe in his Son JESUS CHRIST, that your faith in his sight may never be reproved.”

We are now on the point of separating from each other, and departing to our respective stations among you. We are truly thankful to say that the sittings of this Conference, and the public services connected with them, have been distinguished by an unusual de-

gree of the presence and blessing of GOD. We pledge ourselves again to Him and his Cause. We desire to "spend and be spent" in his service; and we humbly and confidently trust that his blessing will more abundantly attend our endeavours.

At this time we feel ourselves powerfully warned and stimulated by the removal of several of our Brethren; and, especially, by that of MESSRS. SARGENT and LLOYD, who were on their way to join us in Conference, when, by the overturning of the coach, they were so seriously injured, that, in a short time, they terminated their labours and sufferings on earth, and passed, from the various services of the church militant, to the unfading glories of the church triumphant. Others of our Brethren were at the same time much hurt; but we trust they will be restored in answer to our prayers, and still permitted to "labour in the word and doctrine."—With occurrences like these before our eyes, we resolve to "work while it is called to-day," and humbly wait our LORD's appearing.—"Be ye also ready; for at such an hour as ye think not, the SON OF MAN cometh."

Signed by order of the Conference,

HENRY MOORE, *President.*

ROBERT NEWTON, *Secretary.*

Sheffield, August 11th, 1823.